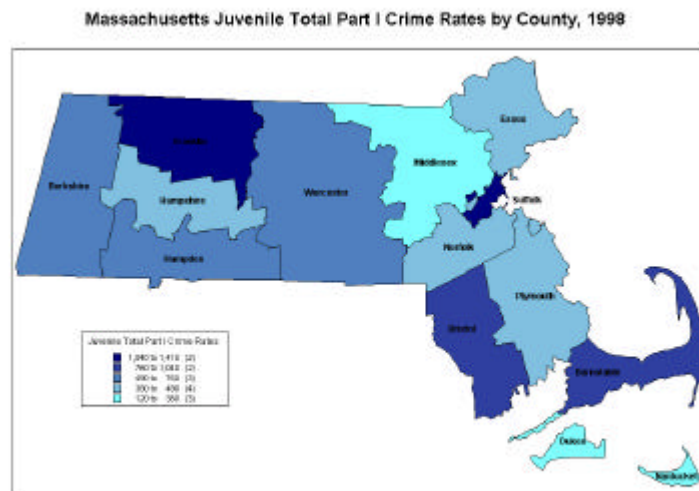

Juvenile Crime in Massachusetts:

Executive Summary

The Characteristics of Massachusetts' Juvenile Population,
Juveniles in the Justice System, Juvenile Arrests, and Data
Reported by Massachusetts Law Enforcement to
the National Incident-Based Reporting System



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division

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This report can also be downloaded in PDF from the Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division Web Page at: <http://www.state.ma.us/ccj>

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If you refer to this report in a publication or in any other manner, we would appreciate being informed about such a reference. Whenever possible, a copy of such a document or reference should be sent to the Statistical Analysis Center at the address below.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The information presented in this report was compiled from a variety of sources, representing all phases of the juvenile justice and social service systems. While the data contained in the first two sections of this report were extracted from existing reports, the data presented on juvenile arrests and the National Incident-Based Reporting System findings were compiled and analyzed by the Massachusetts Statistical Analysis Center. For the first time, data regarding the characteristics and behavior of juvenile offenders is available for Massachusetts. While these data have been previously reported from a nationwide perspective, we now have Massachusetts' outlook on juvenile crime. The Executive Summary and complete report can be downloaded in PDF from the Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division Web Page at: <http://www.state.ma.us/ccj>.

I. Characteristics of Massachusetts' Juvenile Population

Data is presented on various demographic conditions and social behaviors of juveniles in Massachusetts, offering a perspective of factors contributing to youth violence and delinquent behavior.

Massachusetts Juvenile Population (U.S. Census Bureau)

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau estimates for the year 2000, youth age 19 years and under represent 27 percent of the total Massachusetts population.
- Youth ages 19 years and under are comprised of 51 percent males and 49 percent females.
- The racial composition of Massachusetts' youth is 76.8 percent white, 7.3 percent African-American, 10.3 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian, and .2 percent Native American.
- The Census Bureau estimates the Massachusetts population of young people between 14 and 17 years old will increase 30 percent by 2005, as compared to 1995 estimates.

Education (Massachusetts Department of Education)

- Remaining consistent with the prior school year, the racial distribution of all public school students during the 1998-1999 school year was: 76.6 percent white, 10.2 percent Hispanic, 8.6 percent African American, 4.2 percent Asian, and .2 percent Native American.
- During the 1999 school year, a total of 9,188 ninth-through-twelfth-graders dropped out of Massachusetts public schools, representing 3.6 percent of the 258,026 students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. The highest dropout rate was seen among the Hispanic youth population (9.8 percent), and the lowest dropout rate was seen among white youth (2.5 percent).
- The number of student exclusions that occurred during the 1998-1999 school year represented a five-year low (1,326 student exclusions). While minority youth comprised 23 percent of the total student population, they accounted for over half (55%) of student exclusions. Hispanic students represented the highest minority exclusion rate. The main causes of school exclusion during the 1998-1999 school year were: weapons possession (24%), possession of illegal substances on school premises (21%), assault on staff (13%), and assault on students (9%).

Unemployment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

- Following the national trend, Massachusetts' unemployment rate for both adults and juveniles continues to steadily decline. The unemployment rate for youth, ages 16-19, declined 39% from its 13-year high in 1992, to the 1999 rate of 5.4.

Teen Pregnancy (Massachusetts Department of Public Health)

- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has consistently fallen below the national average for teenage births (mothers under 20). In 1998, Massachusetts' birth rate was 28.6 per 1,000 women aged 15-19, compared to a national rate of 51.1 per 1,000 women.
- In 1998, 5,902 babies were born to Massachusetts young women under the age of 20. Overall, the Commonwealth's teenage births represent only 7.3 percent of the total state births, significantly below the national teen average of 12.3 percent.
- Fifty percent (50%) of 1998 Massachusetts teen births were to white, non-Hispanic mothers.
- The Massachusetts communities of Holyoke, Chelsea, Lawrence, Springfield, and Southbridge had the highest teen birth rates in Massachusetts in 1998.

Child Abuse and Neglect (Massachusetts Department of Social Services)

- In 1997, the total number of abuse cases reported to DSS was 103,533, an increase of 2 percent over 1996. The number of supported abuse cases also increased in 1997, totaling 29,815, a 10 percent increase over 1996. 1997 witnessed the highest number of both reported and supported abuse cases since 1983.
- Between the years 1988 and 1995, the number of children in foster care services increased from 6,861 to 11,196, an increase of 63 percent. However, by 1997, the number of children in foster care services declined to 9,831, which represents a 12 percent decrease over the 1995 figure.
- Between 1988 and 1997, the total number of children who required community or residential care services increased from 1,402 to 1,728, an increase of 23 percent.
- In 1996, there were 7,638 cases of reported child sexual abuse cases, representing a 5 percent increase from 1995. Supported child abuse cases totaled 1,415, a 7 percent decrease from the previous year.

Gang Involvement (Massachusetts Department of Education)

- According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, one in ten youth (10%) reported gang involvement.
- The 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that youth who reported gang involvement were more likely, than non-gang involved youth, to engage in such high risk behaviors as carrying a weapon, and marijuana and alcohol use.

Youth Drug and Alcohol Use (Massachusetts Department of Education; Massachusetts Department of Youth Services)

- According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS), there has been a reported increase in alcohol use among Massachusetts' high school students and a leveling off or slight decrease in drug and tobacco use.
- The 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that over two-thirds of high school students (67%) have tried smoking cigarettes.

- The 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 80 percent of Massachusetts' high school students reported having had a drink of alcohol in their lifetime, a slight increase from 1997 (79%). In the 30 days prior to the survey, over one half of Massachusetts' high school students reported having at least one drink of alcohol (52%), one third participated in binge drinking (33%), and 8 percent acknowledged engaging in frequent binge drinking.
- In 1999, half of all Massachusetts high school students surveyed (50%) have used marijuana at least once during their lifetime. Thirty-one percent (31%) of students reported marijuana use in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- Almost one student in five (19%) reported inhalant use at least once (e.g., inhaled glue, aerosol sprays or paint fumes in order to get high) in 1995. There was a significant decrease in 1999, with one in seven (14%) high school students reporting inhalant use at least once.
- The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services states that nearly 90 percent of their July 1, 1998, population reported some use of marijuana prior to commitment. Over sixty percent (60%) of the Department of Youth Services population reported using marijuana at least once per week, of which 26% admitted to daily use of marijuana.

Teen Dating Violence (Massachusetts Department of Education)

- According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey one of every eight students (12%) reported being physically or sexually hurt by someone they were dating.

Weapons (Massachusetts Department of Education)

- According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, rates of weapon carrying have declined significantly from 1993 to 1999. Of the four reported weapon related behaviors (e.g., carrying a weapon, carrying a weapon inside of school, and carrying a gun), three have continued to decline over the past seven years..

II. Juveniles In the Justice System

Both Juvenile and District Court data, compiled by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, were presented for cases involving juveniles. Reports produced by the Office of the Commissioner of Probation were utilized to determine the number and offense characteristics of juvenile probationers for the years 1992 through 1999. A description of juveniles committed to the Department of Youth Services was also provided in this section of the report.

Juveniles Processed in Massachusetts' Courts (Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court).

- The total number of delinquency cases entered into Juvenile and District Courts in Massachusetts decreased by 14 percent from 1997 to 1998, and 3 percent from 1998 to 1999.
- While there was a substantial increase in the petitions filed and children represented in Care and Protection Cases in Juvenile Court in 1999 over 1998 (52 and 54 percent respectively), the number of Care and Protection cases received in the District Courts decreased 36 percent in 1999.
- The number of number of Children in Need of Services (CHINS) applications in the Juvenile Court increased 39 percent in 1999. The number of CHINS applications received in the District Court decreased 45 percent in 1999.

Juvenile Probation (Office of the Commissioner of Probation)

- In Fiscal Year 1999, over three-quarters of the juvenile probationers were under the age of 15 years when they committed their first offense.
- The percentage of juveniles (male and female) on probation for person offenses increased from 1992 to 1996, declined slightly in 1997, rose again in 1998, and remained steady in 1999.
- Between 1992 and 1999, the majority of crimes committed by juvenile male probationers were property offenses, averaging 45 percent of the total crimes committed. An examination of offenses by female juveniles from 1992 to 1999 indicates the majority of female probationers (54%) committed offenses against the person.
- The number of juvenile probationers with a Maximum level of supervision has increased 35 percent in the years 1991 to 1999, while the levels Moderate and Minimum have decreased 20 and 15 percent respectively, during that same time period.

Commitments to the Department of Youth Services (DYS) (Massachusetts Department of Youth Services)

- Commitments to the DHS, the juvenile correction agency for the Commonwealth, increased 94 percent between 1989 and 1998.
- As of July 1998, the majority of DHS committed youth (41%) were seventeen years old.
- Between 1989 and 1998, on average, females represented 9.4 percent of total DHS commitments.
- In 1998, the breakdown of race for the DHS committed population was 54.2 percent minorities, 44 percent white, and 1.8 percent other.
- DHS reports that, in 1998, over half of the committed population (55%) were committed or recommitted to the department for a crime against the person.
- The ranking of the five highest commitments for 1998 were armed assault, unarmed assault, burglary, larceny, and drug distribution/possession.

III. Law Enforcement and Juvenile Crime

The FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division provided the 1998 arrest data used for this study. Only those agencies that reported 12 months of data were selected for inclusion in the study. This analysis encompasses juveniles under the age of 18, where the juvenile arrest rates were calculated using juvenile population estimates for each local community in Massachusetts.

- In 1998, Massachusetts police departments submitting Uniform Crime Report arrest data reported that 7,133 juveniles were arrested for Part I crimes, yielding an arrest rate of 619 per 100,000 juveniles. Sixty-two percent of juvenile Part I crime arrests were for property crimes and 38 percent were for violent crimes.
- In total, the race of juveniles arrested for Part I crimes was approximately 72 percent white, 23 percent African American, 3 percent Asian, and .1 percent American Indian. The race of juveniles arrested for Part II crimes was approximately 83 percent white, 15 percent African American, 1 percent Asian, and .2 percent American Indian.
- **Franklin County** had the highest juvenile arrest rate of all fourteen Massachusetts counties for total Part I crimes (1,507), and accordingly, total violent crime (810) and total property

crime (698). The arrest rate for Part II crimes was also ranked first in Franklin County where 3,079 out of 100,000 juveniles were arrested for a Part II offense.

- **Suffolk County** had the highest rate for juveniles arrested for all drug offenses (331); the sale and manufacturing of drugs (155), and weapon carrying and possessing (59).
- **Barnstable County** had the highest arrest rate for drug possession (247).

IV. Juvenile Offenders: An Analysis of Data Reported by Massachusetts Law Enforcement to the National Incident-Based Reporting System

The National Incident Based Reporting Systems (NIBRS) builds on UCR, but collects incident-based rather than summary information regarding incidents and arrests. Law enforcement agencies collect and report detailed information regarding individual crime incidents and arrests relating to the Group “A” offenses, which are the 8 Index crimes and 38 other offenses. Unlike the UCR program, NIBRS counts all offenses and does not utilize the “hierarchy rule.”

The Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit provided the Statistical Analysis Center with the NIBRS dataset covering the years 1994 through 1999. Using a statistical software application, the SAC analyzed these data regarding juvenile offenders between the ages of 5 and 16. In total, the data examined represents 34,147 incidents involving at least one juvenile offender, 43,083 juvenile offenders, 17,205 juvenile arrestees, and 28,887 individual victims who encountered at least one juvenile offender.

Offender/Arrestee Gender, Race and Ethnicity

- Nearly 80 percent of juvenile offenders and arrestees were males.
- The majority of juvenile offenders were white (81 percent of offenders and 82 percent of arrestees), followed by black offenders (11 percent and 12 percent of arrestees). Asian juvenile offenders represented 1 percent of juvenile offenders and 2 percent of juvenile arrestees, and less than 1 percent of juvenile offenders and arrestees were American Indian.
- The ethnicity of the 17,205 juveniles arrested was primarily non-Hispanic (69 percent). Over the six-year period, 18 percent of juveniles were Hispanic.

Arrestee Age

- From 1994 to 1999, 33 percent of juvenile arrestees were 16 years old, 26 percent were 15 years old, and 20 percent were 14 years old. Twenty-one percent of juvenile arrestees were 13 years old or younger.

Arrestee Resident Status

- Approximately three-quarters of juvenile arrestees (76 percent) were residents of the community in which they committed their crime(s). One-quarter of juvenile arrestees committed their crimes outside of their hometown. However, juveniles are more likely to commit the crimes of larceny and murder (38 and 29 percent, respectively) outside of their home community than other crimes. In addition, nearly one-quarter of juveniles arrested for motor vehicle theft were not a resident of the community where they were arrested.

Arrestee Disposition

- Over the total six-year period examined, one-third of juvenile arrestees were handled within the department and the remaining two-thirds of arrestees were referred to another authority.

Arrest Type

- According to Massachusetts' NIBRS data, the majority of juvenile arrestees (70 percent) were arrested "On-View." An additional 24 percent of juvenile arrestees were "Summoned/Cited" and not taken into police custody. The remaining 7 percent of juvenile arrestees were "Taken into Custody" as a result of a warrant or previous incident report.

Number of Offenders in Incident

- In Massachusetts, approximately one in four incidents involving a juvenile were committed by a group of offenders acting together (26 percent of incidents). Clearly, perpetrators acting alone commit the majority of incidents committed by juvenile offenders (74 percent).
- Both male and female offenders were more likely to commit a property crime in a group than a crime against a person.

Number of Victims in Incident

- The overwhelming majority of incidents involving juvenile offenders (approximately 89 percent) involved a single victim. More specifically, 67 percent of incidents involved one offender and one victim and 22 percent of incidents involved one victim and multiple offenders. In approximately 11 percent of incidents perpetrated by juveniles, there were multiple victims. Seven percent of incidents involved multiple victims with one offender, and 4 percent of incidents involved multiple victims and offenders.

Victim Type

- The majority of incidents committed by juveniles were perpetrated against an individual (67 percent of incidents). The remaining 33 percent of incidents were committed against other entities (e.g., a business, financial institution, government, religious organization, society/public).

Victim Age

- Of the 28,887 victims of crimes perpetrated by juvenile offenders, 62 percent of victims were adult, and 38 percent were juvenile.

Victim Injury

- Of the 22,945 incidents that involved an individual victim from 1994 to 1999, the majority of incidents (73 percent) did not result in victim injury. Approximately one-quarter of incidents (26 percent) resulted in an injury to one victim and two or more victims were injured in 2 percent of incidents. From 1994 to 1999, 362 incidents involved injury to two victims, 57 incidents result in three victim injuries, and 19 incidents involved four or more victim injuries.
- Across all six years examined, 8,050 victims were injured (28%), 7,789 victims were not injured (27%) and victim injury was unknown for 13,048 victims (45 percent). Between 1994 and 1999, for the 15,839 victims where injury data was available, nearly half of all

victims did not receive an injury at the hand of a juvenile offender. Forty-five percent of victims received an apparent minor injury, and a severe laceration was received by 3 percent of victims.

Victim/Offender Relationship

- According to Massachusetts NIBRS data, the majority of victims of juvenile crime were known to the offenders, but were not family members or in a dating relationship with the offender (45 percent of victims). Twenty percent of victims were strangers to the offender. Thirteen percent of victims were identified as the offenders' family member. Only 1 percent of victims was in a dating relationship with the offender. Unfortunately, the relationship of the victim to the offender was unknown for 20 percent of the victims.

Types of Crimes Committed

- For the years 1994 through 1999, larceny was the offense perpetrated most often by juvenile offenders, identified as the most serious incident offense in 24 percent of incidents. Aggravated assault was the second most frequently perpetrated offense, with 19 percent of incidents citing aggravated assault as the most serious incident offense. The crimes of larceny and aggravated assault were followed by: destruction, damage or vandalism of property (14 percent of incidents), simple assault (13 percent of incidents), and drug violations (9 percent of incidents).

Index Person and Property Crimes

- The majority of Index offenses committed by juveniles are property offenses (representing 35 percent of incidents). Index crimes against persons were identified as the most serious incident offense in 21 percent of incidents. Other offenses comprised the most serious offense in 44 percent of incidents.
- From 1994 to 1999, 41 percent of juvenile arrestees were arrested for an Index property crime and 17 percent were arrested for an Index person offense. Similar to the incident-level data, a significant portion of juveniles (42 percent) were arrested for non-Index crimes.

Age and Crime Type

- The majority of juvenile offenders in both the under 12 and 12 to 16 age groups commit Index property offenses (43 percent of juveniles under 12 and 42 percent of juveniles between the ages of 12 and 16). The overwhelming majority of crimes are committed by juveniles over the age of 12 (96 percent of Index person, Index property, and non-Index offenses).

Gender and Crime Type

- Females were most likely to be arrested for Index property offenses (49 percent), whereas males were most likely to be arrested for Non-Index offenses (43 percent). However, males commit the overwhelming majority of crimes in all offense groupings (75 percent of Index person and property offenses and 83 percent of less serious, non-Index offenses).

Number of Offenses Committed in Incident

- The overwhelming majority of incidents involving juvenile offenders (89 percent) involved the commission of a single offense. Two offenses were perpetrated in approximately 10

percent of incidents, and between three and five offenses were committed in approximately 2 percent of incidents.

Month of Incident

- Juveniles commit crimes most frequently during the months of October (9.9 percent) and June (9.6 percent) and less frequently during the winter months of January and February (6.4 and 6.1 percent, respectively).

Time of Incident

- Juveniles are most likely to commit crimes during after-school hours. Between 1994 and 1999, over one-third of crimes committed by juveniles (40 percent) occurred between the hours of 2PM and 6PM.

Location of Incident

- During the years 1994 to 1999, approximately one-third of incidents perpetrated by juveniles were committed in a residence (33 percent of incidents). Thirteen percent of incidents occurred on the grounds of a school or college, and approximately 1 in 5 incidents (20 percent of incidents) occurred on a street (i.e., a highway, road or alley). Sixteen percent of incidents were perpetrated in a retail establishment.

Time from Incident to Arrest

- From 1994 to 1999, 91 percent of juvenile arrestees were apprehended within one day of the incident.

Weapons Used in Incidents

- A firearm was present in only a small percentage (2 percent) of incidents involving juvenile offenders, for a total of 572 incidents over the six-year period. From 1994 to 1999, 2 firearms were reportedly used in 62 incidents and 3 firearms were used in 2 incidents.

Arrestee Weapon Possession

- From 1994 through 1999, 770 juveniles had a weapon in their possession at the time of their arrest. In total, the majority of armed arrestees were carrying a lethal cutting instrument (46 percent), followed by arrestees carrying a club, blackjack or brass knuckles (29 percent). Of the 202 arrestees who were armed with a firearm, 43 percent were carrying a handgun.

Weapons and Gender

- Of the 770 juveniles who were armed with a weapon at the time of their apprehension, both male and female arrestees were most likely to be armed with a cutting instrument (42 percent of males and 70 percent of females).

Weapons and Age

- Eighteen of the 25 juveniles (72 percent) under the age of 12 who were armed with a weapon at the time of their apprehension, were armed with a lethal cutting instrument. Juveniles between the ages of 12 and 16 who were apprehended with a weapon were also most frequently armed with a lethal cutting instrument (44 percent). Overwhelmingly, the

majority of all weapons found in the possession of juvenile arrestees were found in juveniles between the ages of 12 and 16.

Gang Involvement

- Between the years of 1994 and 1999, two homicide victims (22 percent) were murdered in a gangland killing, and 34 victims (.4 percent) were assaulted due to gangland circumstances. While no victims were murdered in a juvenile gang killing, 3.2 percent of all victims of aggravated assault (285 victims) were involved in an incident with juvenile gang circumstances.

Gender and Gang Activity

- From 1994 to 1999, 2 percent of victims who were murdered or assaulted by a female offender were victimized because of gangland or juvenile gang circumstances; 4 percent of victims who were murdered or assaulted by a male offender were victimized because of gangland or juvenile gang circumstances.

V. Conclusions and Policy Implications

This study recommends that:

- (1) Programming and innovative strategies that provide positive alternatives to crime during the after school hours be continued,
- (2) Law enforcement and school departments continue to build relationships and implement programs that support police/youth relations and school safety,
- (3) Multijurisdictional projects be implemented to help identify and eradicate juvenile crime patterns occurring across communities,
- (4) The Massachusetts research community continue to demonstrate the value of these data to law enforcement and the public, and
- (5) State policymakers continue to encourage law enforcement participation in UCR and NIBRS.